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# Chaucer's Jailer's Daughter

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# Chaucer's Jailer's Daughter

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**Report**

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

**Master of Arts**

**The University of Texas at Austin**

**May 2015**

## Acknowledgements

I am extremely grateful to my readers, Elizabeth Scala and Douglas Bruster. Thank you both for providing generous guidance that challenged and encouraged me throughout the process of writing this report. A number of my peers—Aubri Plourde, Elliott Turley, Jennifer Sapio, Jessica Egan, Kristin Canfield, and Zachary Hines—willingly read drafts and offered insightful comments that helped me to articulate my argument. I thank my parents, grandparents, and siblings for their constant love and cheerful support.

# Abstract

## Chaucer's Jailer's Daughter

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We know that Shakespeare read Chaucer, but we do not know exactly *how* he read Chaucer. Established models of source studies require solid "proof," but this paper proposes a more liquid conception of influence that permeates a work in unexpected ways. The Jailer's Daughter, the seemingly un-Chaucerian alteration to *The Knight's Tale* frame of the Shakespeare and Fletcher play, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, acts as the case study of such permeation. Only a single line in the lengthy *Knight's Tale* offers a parallel figure for this character: the Knight narrates that Palamon escapes prison "By helpyng of a freend," and in the play the Jailer's Daughter frees Palamon from her father's prison. Because it does not supply dialogue, a name, or even a gender to the "freend," *The Knight's Tale* has long been presumed to offer Shakespeare and Fletcher little beyond this event to inspire the play's more substantive subplot. I argue that the Jailer's Daughter offers a surprising means of connection not only to *The Knight's Tale*, the obvious source text, but also to the other tales of the First Fragment of *The Canterbury Tales*, which "quite" the tale of courtly love that precedes them. In *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, she embodies what the Knight disallows in his narration of the tale, leaking madness and feminine desire into the play's foundation. This structure ultimately suggests how Shakespeare works characterologically, channeling the complexity of a source such as Chaucer fluidly through a unit of character.

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## Introduction

The notion that Shakespeare read Chaucer now forms the foundational premise, rather than the final conclusion, in explorations of the link between the two canonical authors. As demonstrated by numerous source studies, scholars now assert with relative certainty that the playwright knew, likely quite intimately, the works of the famous Middle English poet.[1] Shakespeare's *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, cowritten with John Fletcher, even explicitly names Chaucer as its "noble breeder" (Prologue 10).[2] *The Knight's Tale*, the opening tale of *The Canterbury Tales* and the presumed story given by "Chaucer, of all admired" (Prologue 13), supplies the playwrights with an account of Palamon and Arcite, two noble kinsmen taken as prisoners to Theseus's realm. There, each falls in love with the Duke's new sister-in-law, Emelye. *The Two Noble Kinsmen* uses the characters and events of *The Knight's Tale* explicitly to form its main plot, but Chaucer's works also seem to seep into Shakespeare's plays in ways that are not so cut and dried.

Long before the direct acknowledgment of Chaucer in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, probably his last play, Shakespeare had composed works immersed in multiple aspects of the medieval poet's canon. *The Knight's Tale* proves particularly central to this engagement, as Shakespeare seemed to rewrite the story throughout his career.[3] *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for example,

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[1] E. Talbot Donaldson finds that early comparative studies are "primarily concerned with gathering points of similarity or echoes to prove that Shakespeare read Chaucer, and they have little to say about larger relationships. But comparisons more recent, made since Shakespeare's knowledge has become (more or less generally) accepted, also seem deficient." See *The Swan at the Well: Shakespeare Reading Chaucer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 1-2. Ann Thompson similarly concludes that even without the "'proof' which a school reading-list might have supplied, there can surely be little serious doubt that Shakespeare read Chaucer if he read any English poetry at all." See *Shakespeare's Chaucer: A Study in Literary Origins* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1978), 2. For a history of early source studies linking Chaucer and Shakespeare, see 11-15.

[2] John Fletcher and William Shakespeare, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, ed. Lois Potter (London: Arden Shakespeare: Third Series, 1997): Prologue, 1. Chaucer quotations from Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry Benson, 3rd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 2008). All subsequent quotations will be parenthetical.

[3] If *Two Gentlemen of Verona* is Shakespeare's first play, then with *The Two Noble Kinsmen* the story of *The Knight's Tale* bookends his career. *Two Gentlemen*, as observed by Helen Cooper, features "two young men whose

begins analogously with Theseus and Hippolyta's marriage, but then proceeds with what Helen Cooper calls "leaping imaginativeness."[4] Beyond the initial structural similarity, many other aspects of the play, such as the intervention of the gods and the Mechanicals' production of "Pyramus and Thisbe," seem to engage with Chaucer both in and beyond *The Knight's Tale*. In the midst of all these potential connections, Theseus remains a touchstone for Chaucer's presence, especially as defined by the noble world of *The Knight's Tale*. The ruling figure, like his counterpart in Chaucer's story, must arbitrate the conflict of two young men in love with one woman, with some celestial help. Theseus remains some a of characterological hook for *Dream*, consistently embodying Chaucer's presence in a way that seems to ripple throughout the play. These "ripples" can be difficult to chart definitively, though, especially since so many questions about Shakespeare's relationship to Chaucer remain unanswered.

This ambiguity forms the central problem that source studies of these two authors now must confront: we may know that Shakespeare read Chaucer, but we do not know *how* Shakespeare read his Chaucer.[5] That is, while we can speculate with some certainty what edition Shakespeare would have read Chaucer in, a point I will return to later, we lack not only the logistical details of his personal reading experience, but also direct "proof" of how Shakespeare was thinking about Chaucer's works. Conventional models of "source" and "influence" struggle to convey the complex manner by which another work can fill the mind in mysterious ways, beyond direct quotation.[6] These larger concepts are what Cooper argues that Shakespeare took

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friendship disintegrates into love-rivalry and who finish up in an altercation in the greenwood." See *Shakespeare and the Medieval World* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2010), 209.

[4] Ibid., 209

[5] As far as we know, Shakespeare left no annotations, marginalia, or notes that would suggest his reading practices. This makes a study of the exact "how" of his reading of Chaucer a difficult, and perhaps even impossible, prospect. For one model of how such a reading might look, see Lisa Jardine Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton's "'Studied for Action': How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy," *Past & Present*, 129 (1990): 30-78.

[6] On the potential "anxiety" that Shakespeare might have felt about Chaucer see Kathryn Lynch, "The Three Noble Kinsmen: Chaucer, Shakespeare, Fletcher," *Images of Matter: Essays on British Literature of the Middle Ages and*

from Chaucer: "not primarily words or phrases, but big ideas, big structures, and strong disagreement."[7] Such "big ideas" can engage with diverse meanings of what it means for something to be "Chaucerian," but they can be difficult to prove. This is especially true when held to Ann Thompson's standard of proof for influence, which maintains that "basically one must establish a similarity between the stories of passages in question and then prove, as far as possible, that Chaucer is a more likely source than any other that can be suggested."[8] If one source at one moment in the play is the most provable, though, it does not necessarily mean that the moment is only the product of a single influence. Thompson's requirements, which ultimately exclude the possibility of a confluence of thoughts, seem too simplistic, especially in relation to a collaborative work like *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.

Rather, Shakespeare's plays engage in a borrowing technique that can be, and at times has been, best described as fluid. A language of liquid permeation conveys a mixture of authority and influences, providing a more apt means of describing collaboration and creation between authors. For a start, such verbiage is explicitly suggested by *The Two Noble Kinsmen*; the Prologue claims that the authors, "weak as we are, and, almost breathless, swim / In this deep water" (Prologue 24-25) of Chaucer. Perhaps subconsciously, critics have previously turned to water metaphors to illustrate the relationship between playwright and source. In his introduction to a collection of essays on *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, for example, Charles H. Frey describes addressing "the terrible tide of significance," and that "behind that tide and the seemingly original authorial labor launched upon it, there lies an ocean of historical traditions."[9] Most

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*Renaissance*, ed. Yvonne Bruce (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005): 73-91. See also Misha Teramura, "Anxiety and *Auctoritas*: Chaucer and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 63 (2012): 544-76.

[7] Cooper, *Shakespeare and the Medieval World*, 210.

[8] Thompson, *Shakespeare's Chaucer,* 10.

[9] Charles H. Frey, introduction to *Shakespeare, Fletcher and* The Two Noble Kinsmen (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989):1-5, at 3.

famously, E. Talbot Donaldson names his landmark study of Shakespeare and Chaucer *The Swan at the Well*. Donaldson formed his watery title from two instances of notable Renaissance authors characterizing Chaucer and Shakespeare with their own watery metaphors: Ben Jonson's poem in the preface to the First Folio calls Shakespeare the "Sweet Swan of Avon," while Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* hails Chaucer as the "well of English undefyled" (4.2.32.8).[10] This use of water as a symbol to construct the flow of ideas between Chaucer and Shakespeare (and Fletcher, in the case of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*) presumably invites a freer conception of influence. Too often in criticism, though, the understanding of what might be "Chaucerian" in the work has been limited by a felt need for a proof that is more solid and concrete.

**The Mystifying Jailer's Daughter**

*The Two Noble Kinsmen*, the play that appears to most firmly relate to Chaucer, is a particularly interesting case study for this idea of fluidity. While leaving much of the frame of the Palamon and Arcite story intact, Shakespeare and Fletcher add a substantial subplot about a mad Jailer's Daughter. In this paper I will argue that the Jailer's Daughter, the ostensible excrescence from Chaucer's noble tale, embodies diverse aspects of the Chaucerian presence in the play. Shakespeare and Fletcher channel Chaucer's presence into and through this single character, reminiscent of how Theseus functions in *Dream*. When viewed through a Chaucerian lens of not just *The Knight's Tale* but also aspects of *The Canterbury Tales*, she "leaks" what the Knight tries to forbid from his tale into the play.

[10] Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queen: Books Three and Four*, ed. Dorothy Stephens (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2006). The swan reference also evokes the ancient Greek motif that the souls of poets passed into swans, as exemplified in Horace's *Odes II*. See Diane J. Rayor and William Wendell Batstone, eds., *Latin Lyric and Elegiac Poetry: An Anthology of New Translations* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995), 322. Donaldson continues to use water language within his text to describe the movement between the works: some of *The Knight's Tale*'s "spirit of arbitrariness, of randomness, spills over into [Shakespeare's] comedy." See *Swan at the Well*, 43.

The Jailer's Daughter is a perplexing character, to say the least. Initially, her added presence seems to allow for the perfect coupling of all the young lovers, rather like in *Midsummer*. Her love for Palamon, it might appear, can solve the tragic numbers game of *The Knight's Tale* by providing a potential match for the leftover nobleman who fails to win Emilia. Her low class, though, prohibits her from providing the mathematical answer that the plot otherwise requires. After Palamon stops interacting with her once she sets him free, she eventually goes mad in a way that resonates with other portrayals of tragic "true" madness on the Renaissance stage.[11] Whereas madness elsewhere in Shakespeare is associated with a higher class (Ophelia, Othello, Lear, Lady Macbeth), her particular descent into true madness (a result of her unsuitability for the noble Palamon) contradicts her low-class; the fool is a fool from beginning to end.[12] She therefore seems to flow between aristocratic, tragic potential and the comic bawdiness connected to a lower class.

This movement between comic and tragic is also a defining characteristic of the play itself. Entered in the Stationers' Register as "tragicomedy," *The Two Noble Kinsmen* strangely fluctuates between these two poles in its retelling of Chaucer's medieval romance.[13] In performance especially, audience responses to the Jailer's Daughter seem to epitomize the mixed reactions that the tragicomedy as a whole can produce. Surveying her historical reputation,

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[11] When the Jailer's Daughter goes mad, the audience might assume she is doomed, reflecting Foucault's observation that madness in Shakespearean signals "death and murder…There is no going back to truth or reason. It opens only onto a tear in the fabric of the world, and therefore onto death." See, *History of Madness*, ed. Jean Khalfa (Abingdon, Oxon: Taylor and Francis, 2006), 37-38.

[12] Douglas Bruster, working from Brian Vickers's "Rites of Passage in Shakespeare's Prose," *Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft West: Jahrbuch* (1986), makes this observation in relation to the Jailer's Daughter, stating that "madness is a psychic property of the aristocracy if we look at plays written before *The Two Noble Kinsmen*." See "The Jailer's Daughter and the Politics of Madwomen's Language," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 46 (1995): 277-300, at 289.

[13] *The Knight's Tale* is not immune to its own tonal struggles in attempting to reconcile different genres. The medieval romance of chivalry does seem to be the Knight's "narrative vehicle," according to Winthrop Wetherbee, but it must deal with "classical material, and the tradition of classical epic that lies behind it," through the history of Boccaccio and Statius. See "Romance and Epic in Chaucer's Knight's Tale," *Exemplaria* 2 (1990): 303-28, at 303. See also David Anderson, *Before the Knight's Tale: Imitation of Classical Epic in Boccaccio's Teseida* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), esp. 192-224.

Douglas Bruster finds that "the Jailer's Daughter has long proved the affective center of the play; from the Restoration to the present, audiences and critics have invariably acknowledged the unexpected force of her role."[14] Critics debate whether this affect is positive or negative. In performance history and in his own experience, Hugh Richmond observes that the Jailer's Daughter generates an "intensely positive response" from the audience, and is "more humorous, more dynamic, and more significant than can easily be perceived on the printed page."[15] Conversely, her treatment in, and by, the play can easily be perceived as cruel.[16] Lois Potter concludes that "whether audiences found the Daughter's final situation tragic or comic would depend on whether they wanted to make her story…part of the tragedy of the play."[17] The Jailer's Daughter's character continually poses problems that critics feel an impulse to solve: Is she comic or tragic? Powerful or oppressed? Shakespeare's or Fletcher's?

As the "mixed up" character that needs "curing," the Jailer's Daughter historically functions as a litmus test for how a scholar sees the competing influences of Shakespeare and Fletcher at work; she becomes the territory on which the authorial relationship gets inscribed. Most early scholarship contends that her pathos (if anything) comes from Shakespeare, while her (often unsuitable, too sensual) comedy is written by Fletcher.[18] Yet her character resists such

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[14] Bruster, "The Jailer's Daughter and the Politics," 278.

[15] See "Performance as Criticism: *The Two Noble Kinsmen*," in *Shakespeare, Fletcher and* The Two Noble Kinsmen": 163-85, at 184-85. Richmond claims that in performance, her memorable presence can emphasize "the comic pathos of humanity's uneasy relationship to the sexual drive that both threatens and ensures the survival of society and its institutions" (177).

[16] Lynch, for example, argues that The Wooer's disguise "cruelly expos[es] not only the depth of her delusion but the full extent of Palamon's indifference to her ("The Three Noble Kinsmen," 87).

[17] Lois Potter, "Topicality or Politics? The Two Noble Kinsmen 1613-34," *The Politics of Tragicomedy: Shakespeare and After*, ed. Gordon McMullan and Jonathan Hope (London: Routledge, 1992): 77-91, at 89.

[18] Donaldson believes the Jailer's Daughter was "handled almost exclusively by Fletcher, and hence not included in my discussion." See *Swan at the Well*, 69. Gossett finds this "impressionistic desire," to be especially prevalent before mid-twentieth century. The critical impulse, as Gossett describes it, "to attribute whatever the critic does not like…to Fletcher and whatever the critic does admire…to Shakespeare" might also be at play in determining her origins. See "*The Two Noble Kinsmen* and *King Henry VIII*: The Last Last Plays," *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's Last Plays*, ed. Catherine M.S. Alexander (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 185-202, at 190. Susan Green also comments that according to earlier critics, "lower-class characters go with Fletcher, the

attempts to solidify her as one author's "daughter."[19] Dividing the play, and particularly her character, into separate, alternating parts thus oversimplifies the final product of both her and the play.[20] An advocate for "forego[ing] anachronistic attempts to divine the singular author of each scene, phrase, and word," Jeffrey Masten posits that, "tellingly named, the Jailer's Daughter may signify an escape from the very idea of constraining authorial attribution, for her discourse is a patch-work of songs and ballads" that echo familiar words of other poets and plays, all in "an era of complicated transition in theatrical texts, from a paradigm of collaboration to one of single authorship."[21] As epitomized by Arcite's quick loss of his "prize" (5.3.16) and life, the play itself questions definitive claims to property, including authorial claims. Regarding the play's dual authorship, Potter finds that as scholars, "like Theseus, we want a straightforward decision about property."[22] In defiance of this desire for ownership, the currently agreed upon scene distribution implies, as Suzanne Gossett maintains, that both authors were "involved in all parts."[23]

The understanding of this character's composition has evolved to absorb a more fluid conception of influence between the coauthors. But if critics are now open to seeing her as a

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lesser dramatist; Shakespeare is preserved for the formal, 'sane' realm of male authority." See "'A mad woman? We are made, boys!': The Jailer's Daughter in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*," *Shakespeare, Fletcher and* The Two Noble Kinsmen: 121-32, at 122.

[19] The play seems to have a complicated relationship to fatherhood, according to Lynch. Exploring the potentially "anxious" relationship between the playwrights and their literary forbearer Chaucer, Lynch posits that if the play's nautical imagery "suggests the traditional association of literary work with sailing vessel," then "*The Two Noble Kinsmen,* like many of Shakespeare's later plays, tacks toward a redemptive vision of childing and fatherhood, but a significant and troubling undertow is always dragging it back." See "The Three Noble Kinsmen," 86.

[20] Lynch argues that such variation is integral to the work's identity; the play succeeds "mostly by incorporating and foregrounding the tensions that attend coauthorship." See "The Three Noble Kinsmen," 86. Similarly, Richmond argues that the play in performances creates "a unique stage effect, a ruefully humorous pathos for which it has been dexterously, consciously, and systematically designed by its author(s)." See "Performance as Criticism," 183.

[21] Jeffrey Masten, *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship, and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 7, 60, 102.

[22] Potter warns that attempts to set "Shakespeare and Fletcher against each other, as if the result of their combat could at last give us an answer to this curious play" collude "with precisely the same destructive absolutism whose consequences *The Two Noble Kinsmen* has so vividly depicted." See "Topicality or Politics?," 90-91.

[23] Suzanne Gossett, "The Two Noble Kinsmen," 190. Gossett reports that "a few uncertainties remain about *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, but the division is usually agreed to be Shakespeare Act 1 (possibly with the very brief 1.5 by Fletcher), 2.1, 3.1-2, 4.3, and 5.1, 3, and 4, with Fletcher writing the rest."

product of collaboration, they largely find her to be separate from Chaucer, the play's "noble breeder" and the play's other author, of sorts. At most, her character is seen as embodying more general themes of *The Knight's Tale* while she remains largely sealed off from the nobles.[24] In his introduction to *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, Hallett Smith summarizes the scholarly consensus about the Jailer's Daughter's lack of relation to the source: she is "the chief alteration made in Chaucer's narrative."[25] Indeed, only a single line in the lengthy *Knight's Tale* offers a parallel figure for this character. Palamon escapes prison "By helpyng of a freend" (1468), according ot the Knight, and in the play it is the Jailer's Daughter who "ventured" (2.6.2) to set Palamon free. Because it does not supply dialogue, a name, or even a gender to the "freend," *The Knight's Tale* has long been presumed to offer Shakespeare and Fletcher little beyond this event to inspire the play's more substantive subplot; the Jailer's Daughter's later prominent descent into madness is the "un-Chaucerian" excrescence to the frame *The Knight's Tale* offers the play. Madness, though, can be easily found in Chaucer's story; it poses an explicit threat to Theseus's realm in *The Knight's Tale*.

**Madness in *The Knight's Tale*: "Maladye" and "Manye"**

When Palamon and Arcite both fall for Emelye at first sight, their immediate, if irrational, devotion conforms to the conventions of courtly love: Chaucer later describes Palamon's "fyr of jalousie" seizing him "by the herte / So woodly" (1299-1301). The poem distinguishes though, between this "loveris maladye" that initially afflicts the courtly lover, and another, even more debilitating level of madness. Upon banishment to Athens, Arcite behaves

[24] Two landmark studies on Shakespeare and Chaucer generally take this approach. Thompson concludes that "her role is to provide another example of amorous passion, pathetic and self-destructive as the love of the kinsmen though on a different plane." See *Shakespeare's Chaucer*, 170. Donaldson also sees her function as demonstrating broad motifs of "the destructive power of Venus" and the exchangeability of lovers. See *The Swan at the* Well, 69.
[25] Hallett Smith, "Introduction to *The Two Noble Kinsmen*," *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans and J.J. M. Tobin, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 1690.

Nat oonly lik the loveris maladye
Of Hereos, but rather lyk manye,
Engendred of humour malencolik
Biforen, in his celle fantastik.
And shortly, turned was al up so doun
Bothe habit and eek disposicioun
Of hym, this woful lovere daun Arcite. (1373-79)

For a "yeer or two" (1381) in Thebes, Arcite suffers "manye," a Middle English word signifying uncontrolled "mania," that turns his life upside down. It affects him both physically and mentally far more than Palamon's "wood" (mad; 1301) jealousy.[26] When the gods eventually decide that Arcite's "manye" merits divine intervention, Mercury visits him in a dream vision to "bad hym to be murie" (1386). Awaking with a start, Arcite apparently regains some level of sanity when he rationalizes "that, sith his face was so disfigured / Of maladye the which he hadde endured" (1403-04), he can return to Athens unknown and be near Emelye. With some help from the gods, he appears to leave the worst of his "manye" behind in Thebes. He returns to Athens, and presumably a condition more like his former "loveris maladye," with his "habit and eek disposicioun" no longer "up so doun."

In *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, unlike in Chaucer's tale, Arcite never departs Athens after his banishment. He vows that he will "not leave the kingdom" (2.3.19), and subsequently never experiences something akin to the "manye" that Chaucer's Arcite undergoes in Thebes. The play lacks a Mercury figure, or any god for that matter, to intervene on his behalf. In one of the most significant changes from source to play, no god characters ever enter the stage world of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.[27] Without a Mercury to "bad hym to be murie" and help him return to the

[26] Jacqueline Tasioulas also finds that Arcite's madness differs significantly from Palamon's affliction, claiming Arcite "alone suffers from the most extreme form of desire, enduring not just conventional 'love-longing' but the full medically acknowledged condition of *amor heroes*." See "'Dying of imagination' in the First Fragment of the Canterbury Tales," *Medium Ævum* 82 (2013): 213-35, at 213.

[27] This removal of the gods is one of the most obvious changes in the adaptation. If Venus, Mars and Saturn largely dominate "the horrors" in Chaucer, then, to quote Donaldson, "Shakespeare puts them back where they started, in

kingdom, the play's Arcite is never subject to the extreme "manye" that afflicts Arcite in the tale. Shakespeare's choice to remove the gods from the play seems particularly notable in relation to his other romances: Jupiter, called by spirits, descends to the stage in *Cymbeline*; "Time" is some sort of a celestial figure in the *The Winter's Tale*; and *The Tempest* features a masque with Juno, Ceres and Iris, brought by the spirit Ariel at the command of god-like Prospero. The character of the medieval poet Gower might occupy a similar space in *Pericles*, where he acts as a Chorus figure above the world of the story.[28] Shakespeare does not write a "Chaucer" to guide *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and the removal of Mercury, Venus, Mars and Saturn from his version of the story is especially notable in relation to *Dream*, which prominently stages the intercessions of the gods into the story of the young lovers. In relation to the source and to Shakespeare's own works, then, the lack of celestial figures on stage is striking. With no help from the gods, Theseus alone must be the visible figure of authority in the play.

Shakespeare perhaps initially offers a little help to Theseus with his large task by reducing the threat of Arcite's "manye"; both Arcite and Palamon in the play only inherit the tamer "loveris maladye." In their first debate over Emilia, Arcite tells Palamon, "You are mad" (2.2.203), yet Palamon insists that "in this madness if I hazard thee / And take thy life, I deal but

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the hearts of people." See *Swan at the Well*, 53. Notably, the subsequent tales in the First Fragment set a precedent for conspicuously absent gods. *The Miller's Tale*, a story of a flood and a carpenter and his wife, is "secularized to the point of near-blasphemy. God as a controller of human events never gets a look in," according to Cooper. See *Oxford Guides to Chaucer: The Canterbury Tales*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 101.

[28] The role of Gower in *Pericles* suggests a complicated relationship to the medieval poet, ultimately unique from how Shakespeare negotiates his relationship to Chaucer. Martha Driver specifically explores Shakespeare's choice to stage Gower as opposed to Chaucer in "Conjuring Gower in *Pericles*," *John Gower, Trilingual Poet*, ed. Elisabeth Dutton, John Hines, and R.F. Yeager (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010): 315-25. Hallett Smith's introduction to *Pericles* finds that "the play's debt to Gower, regarded in Shakespeare's time as an old-fashioned poet, is acknowledged and partly apologized for by his role as Chorus or presenter, as done in a quaintly naïve style." See "Introduction to *Pericles*," *The Riverside Shakespeare*: 1527-30, at 1528. Kelly Jones argues for a similarly ambivalent view of Gower's "liminal" presence, addressing how his "theatrical positioning concurrently antagonized and complimented the representation of Gower as a literary authority." See "The Quick and the Dead": Performing the Poet Gower in *Pericles," Shakespeare and the Middle Ages: Essays on the Performance and Adaptation of the Plays with Medieval Sources or Settings*, ed. Martha W. Driver and Sid Ray (Jefferson, NC: McFarland Publishing, 2009): 201-14, at 203.

truly" (2.2.205-6); his courtly love "madness" makes "true" sense for his romantic cause. Later, Arcite taunts the escaped Palamon, asking if "is't not mad lodging / Here in the wild woods, cousin?" (3.3.22-3). Palamon's response of "yes, for them / That have wild consciences" (3.3.23-4) again suggests that such an unmeasured "wild" madness differs from that claimed by the courtly lover who "deals truly."

Palamon and Arcite may flirt with a wild "woodness" to differing degrees in both play and tale, but in all cases the Duke ultimately governs the sanity of the kinsmen. A parallel scene in both works demonstrates the court's control over the courtly lover. In *The Knight's Tale,* Palamon hears Arcite's pledge to Emelye in the woods and leaps out of the bushes "as he were wood" (1578), fighting as he "were a wood leon." Even "as wilde bores gonne they to smyte, / That frothen whit as foom for ire wood" (1656-9), Palamon and Arcite still heed Theseus's cry of "Hoo!" (1706), and proceed to engage in coherent discourse with Theseus. Similarly, in *The Two Noble Kinsmen,* Arcite accuses Palamon of being mad when he continues fighting as the Duke approaches (3.6.122), but they also cease when Theseus enters and chastises them as "ignorant and mad malicious traitors"(3.6.132). Whether the fighting in both cases is stopped by guards or by their own accord, Palamon and Arcite always leave their "wild" states behind to converse rationally with Theseus.[29] Even at its most unruly, then, the noblemen's courtly love falls subject to the Duke's rational, patriarchal authority.

Shakespeare and Fletcher may omit Arcite's most extreme madness from beyond Theseus's realm in *The Knight's Tale* from Arcite's storyline in the play, but they do not

[29] That courtly love seems to be a condition from which one can recover, or the very least continue to keep rationally functioning, is epitomized in *The Canterbury Tales* by Absolon in *The Miller's Tale.* A parody of the courtly lover, he immediately is "heeled of his maladie" (3757) after kissing Alison's "naked ers" (3734). Even Palamon, who sits alone in prison for seven years with "that love destreyneth so,/ that wood out of his wit he goth for wo?" (1455-6) still lives rationally in Theseus's realm, seemingly because such codified, male desire, falls within the bounds of allowed madness.

abandon this conception of a "manye" more extreme than the "loveris maladye." Instead, Arcite's Theban "manye" bears strong resemblance to the condition of the delusional Jailer's Daughter. Just as Arcite becomes turned "al up so doun / Bothe habit and eek disposicioun," her character, according to her father, becomes "so far from what she was" (4.1.39), now answering his questions "so sillily, as if she were a fool" (4.1.40). The geographic location of their respective "manye" produces the largest difference between them. Though the playwrights may initially eliminate the threat of Arcite's "manye" in the absence of interceding gods, the Jailer's Daughter keeps such madness "home" in Athens. What Shakespeare and Fletcher appear to banish from Chaucer's story, then, returns in the disguised form of the Jailer's Daughter subplot.

The "manye" in these works suggests a larger power outside of Theseus's authority, functioning beyond the scope of a Duke's control. Mad in Athens, the Jailer's Daughter's can express what the noblemen cannot seem to fully say within Theseus's realm. An expression of a potential subversive power has been previously observed in her language. Her madness, Bruster argues, "licenses speech freer than that of any other female character in Shakespeare's plays."[30] When Palamon and Arcite drink to past sexual exploits, Arcite's story of the seduction of a "pretty brown wench" (3.3.39) in the woods breaks off with a "Heigh ho" (3.3.42). Palamon accuses Arcite of thinking about Emilia, and they proceed to plan their duel that Theseus will interrupt. This break in the story before its most erotic moment, an occupatio of sorts, suggests that their sexuality is somehow monitored unlike ever before. Meanwhile, the Jailer's Daughter waits nearby in the woods, explicitly desiring such a seduction from Palamon. She wonders aloud, "What should I do to make him know I love him? / For I would fain enjoy him" (2.4.29-30).

[30] Bruster, "The Jailer's Daughter and the Politics," 288.

In addition to expressing sexual desire in Theseus's realm, the Jailer's Daughter's madness makes the landscape more dangerous. Differentiating between real and superficial madness in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, Julie Sanders argues that for the Jailer's Daughter, "the pun on 'wood' that remained ironic for Palamon and Arcite becomes all too real." In contrast to the "controlled royal space of hunting and lists that Theseus and the knights prescribe and describe…her woodland is a frighteningly real one of wolves and howling."[31] The wood, a place where Palamon and Arcite attempt to resolve their dispute through combat, only to be interrupted by Theseus in both the tale and the play, proves to be a regulated, public space. No matter where they are in Athens, they are never outside of Theseus's scope. In contrast, the "wood" of the Jailer's Daughter, in both meanings of the term, does not completely belong to Theseus; her discourse and space within the play seems outside of Theseus's jurisdiction.

The limits of this "freedom" remain undefined. The doctor insists that he can cure the Jailer's Daughter, since "'Tis not an engrafted madness but a most thick and profound melancholy" (4.3.48-50), but, unlike Mercury's cure of Arcite in the tale, the audience never sees such a result. Some modern productions of the play even choose to have the daughter reappear at the end, still mad.[32] Her madness, which shares a stage with Theseus's attempts to control his realm, poses two opposite possibilities in how threatening her "power" might be. For one, she might safely "absorb" the poem's excess madness while she remains in Athens, separate enough from the noble plot.[33] Alternatively, she might embody something even more dangerous than

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[31] Julie Sanders, "Mixed Messages: The Aesthetics of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* ," in *The Poems, Problem Comedies, Late Plays*, ed. Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard, *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works* 4 vols. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003) 4: 445-61, at 452.

[32] Potter, introduction to *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, by John Fletcher and William Shakespeare (London: Arden Shakespeare: Third Series, 1997), 53, 84, 96.

[33] Green would probably side with this stance. She argues that the Jailer's Daughter helps Theseus maintain his power, that she is the "something in reserve, something hopeful, some preserve of eccentricity and passion distant and remote but totally responsive to desire for symbolic mastery." See "'A mad woman? We are made," 130-31.

Arcite's "manye" in *The Knight's Tale*, since her madness never comes under Theseus's or the gods' control.

**Liquid and *The Knight's Tale***

From the beginning to the end of *The Knight's Tale*, Theseus actively works to restrain extreme feeling in Athens, never allowing excessive emotion, a possible precursor to madness, to go ignored. Such emotion repeatedly comes in the form of weeping, which risks saturating the romance with tears. The medieval religious tradition of crying women, which shows the potential of tears to be empowering and agential, suggests that this form of expressing emotion could pose a legitimate threat to the totality of Theseus's control.[34] Ypolita (1749), Venus (2470, 2666), and Emelye (at Diana's shrine [2327, 2342] and for Arcite [2885]) all outwardly express inward feeling by crying. In his study of Chaucerian influence on Shakespeare, Donaldson also marks the repeated crying, commenting that "all the women in *The Knight's Tale* produce a portion of tears" and that as narrator, the Knight "seems to regard women as chiefly distinguished for weeping."[35] Not always limited by gender, tears also fall from Palamon and Arcite (1100, 1222, 1280, 1369, 2817), but not Theseus.[36] Instead, Theseus continually intervenes to control public displays of feeling. His closing act, to quiet the "infinite" "teeres" (2829) of the townspeople for Arcite, echoes his response to the "sorwe" of the mourning wives at the beginning, who make

[34] Much of the discourse on the power of tears centers on the weeping of Margery Kempe. For more on this, see Dhira B. Mahoney, "Margery Kempe's Tears and the Power over Language," *Margery Kempe: A Book of Essays*, ed. Sandra J. McEntire (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992): 37-50, and Santha Bhattacharji, "Tears and Screaming: Weeping in the Spirituality of Margery Kempe," *Holy Tears: Weeping in the Religious Imagination*, ed. Kimberley Christine Patton and John Stratton Hawley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005): 229-241. For a specific study of tears in relation to the romance genre, see Andrew Lynch, "'Now, fye on youre wepynge': Tears in Medieval English Romance," *Parergon* 9 (1991): 43-62.

[35] Donaldson, *Swan at the Well*, 60.

[36] Patricia Clare Ingham explores in further detail what it means for *The Knight's Tale* to show the knights' male bodies in pain. The Duke's masculinity, Ingham concludes, "remains set apart from the victimized masculinities of Palamon and Arcite, masculinities upon which his governance nonetheless has depended." She continues: with a "stoicism represented in contrast to the moans and swoons of women," he uses his understanding of sorrow to be compassionate, separating himself from "tyrant Creon," yet still maintaining his manliness through differentiation from excessive weeping. See "Homosociality and Creative Masculinity in the *Knight's Tale*," in *Masculinities in Chaucer*, ed. Peter G. Beidler (Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 1998):23-35, at 32-33.

such a cry "that in this world nys creature lyvynge / that herde swich another waymentynge" (901-2). If left unrestrained, the Knight says, women "sorwen so / Or elllis fallen in swich maladye / that at the laste certieinly they dye" (2824-6). Tears, then, cause action in *The Knight's Tale*; Theseus takes steps to dam the overflow of grief, and celestially, Saturn reacts to Venus's tears at Palamon's loss.

Initially evident as tears, liquid imagery corresponds with feeling and passion in *The Knight's Tale*. If a flood of violent weeping threatens Theseus's realm, the sanctioned "loveris maladye" of courtly love is depicted through images of water under control. Leaving the worst of his "manye" behind in Thebes, Arcite conforms to Athenian life by disguising himself as Philostrate, exchanging his "wood" state to "hewen wode, and water bere" (1422) for Theseus's court. When Arcite later wanders out to celebrate May, he roams "al his fille" and sings "al the roundel lustily" until

> Into a studie he fil sodeynly,
> As doon thise loveres in hir queynte geres,
> Now in the crope, now doun in the breres,
> Now up, now doun, as boket in a welle.
> Right as the Friday, soothly for to telle,
> Now it shyneth, now it reyneth faste,
> Right so kan geery Venus overcaste
> The hertes of hir folk; right as hir day
> Is gereful, right so chaungeth she array. (1529-3)

The moods of the courtly lover in Athens are here epitomized by images of water subject to another, external power. Arcite may be the one who pulls the rope to draw water as Philostrate, but he does this from a position of servitude in Theseus's court where he must "drugge and drawe, what so men wol devyse" (1416). Arcite himself is a "boket in a welle," continually pulled up and down on a predetermined track.[37] This steady, controlled balance directly contrasts

[37] Conversely, as will be explored later, *The Miller's Tale* creates an image of a bucket in which, violently, "doun gooth al" (3821).

with his previous mania, when "turned was al up so doun." In an immediate demonstration of this vertical trajectory ruled by some external force, Arcite's soliloquy lamenting his subjugated social status (Now highte I Philostrate, noght worth a myte [1558]) at his enemy's court for Emelye ("the cause wherfore that I dye" [1568]), ends with him falling "doun in a traunce / A longe tyme, and after he up sterte" (1572-3). His fainting is dramatic but momentary, and soon he arises to continue serving in Theseus's realm. As with the "boket," the metaphor of the alternating weather, whether "now it shyneth, now it reyneth faste," also shows the authority of a higher "geery" power over the courtly lover.[38]

Do the liquid metaphors of Chaucer's source tale, particularly the overflowing "teeres" and the controlled "boket in a welle" that express the threat and containment of feeling in Theseus's realm, transfer in some way to Shakespeare and Fletcher's play? The "two dominant images" of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, according to Sanders, are "water and horses," which both "play vividly with these ideas of boundaries and the exceeding of them."[39] The horse metaphors seem to arise naturally from the plot, since a horse eventually causes Arcite's death.[40] The same plot-based argument for the recurrent water imagery, though, cannot be so easily made. Unlike

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[38] At the parallel moment in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* when Arcite goes "a-Maying," he does not fall into a trance, but rather fantasizes about Palamon's jealousy. He muses that if Palamon knew he "eared her language, lived in her eye; oh, coz / What passion would enclose thee!" (3.1.29-30). The passion of the "loveris malayde," therefore, seems to contain its subject in a way opposite from that of the Jailer's Daughter. While her madness suggests an increasing "openness," the courtly lover is "enclosed."

[39] Sanders, "Mixed Messages," 453.

[40] On the horse metaphor, Tasioulas explains that "the horse and rider analogy is used extensively from antiquity onwards to explain the difficult relationship between man's intellect and his physical desires or passions…The difference between the physical self and the will is emphasized by Chaucer in the distinction between Arcite and his horse" ("'Dying of imagination' in the First," 227). For more on the equestrian metaphor in Chaucer, particularly in regards to threatening female power and the visual tradition of the "Mounted Aristotle," see Marilynn Desmond, *Ovid's Art and the Wife of Bath: The Ethics of Erotic Violence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006). Furthermore, the representation of the uncontrollable by the repeated horse metaphors provides another argument for considering the influences of the First Fragment on the play, as explored in this essay. Alison's description in *The Miller's Tale* calls her "wynsynge…as is a joly colt" (3263), while a runaway horse running free in the wetland, "toward the fen, ther wilde mares renne" (4065), features prominently in *The Reeve's Tale*. Jeanne Addison Roberts discusses the implications of Arcite's uncontrollable horse belonging to Emilia in the play, which she calls "surely no accident." In this moment, Roberts argues, "female and animal Wilds have conspired to defeat him." See *The Shakespearean Wild: Geography, Genus, and Gender* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 138-39.

the other late romances of *Pericles*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, the sea does not figure literally into the events of the play. Yet for no plot-inspired reason, images of water and the "vessels" that navigate them notably permeate *The Two Noble Kinsmen*; Steve Mentz even claims that the play features the "most dramatic extension of shipwreck as a literary artifice" in Shakespeare's canon.[41] No nautical event in the source story immediately invites such patterns of imagery, but the preoccupation with liquidity in *The Knight's Tale* fuses the "languages" of these works. Furthermore, Chaucer's repeated association of emotion and fluidity suggests a discourse of watery instability that runs beneath his *Tales* and Shakespeare and Fletcher's play.

**The "Moped" Jailer's Daughter**

Tracing the movement of these liquid metaphors across these works surprisingly draws particular attention to the mad Jailer's Daughter, the ostensibly un-Chaucerian character in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. As Shakespeare and Fletcher's exemplar of uncontrolled feeling, her strong associations with liquid imagery recall Chaucerian connections. Arcite's service "to drugge and drawe" to be near Emelye reverses the Jailer's Daughter's initial, pre-madness task of bringing her beloved Palamon water (2.4.22). If Arcite's metaphorical "boket" stays steadily on track and unspilled in *The Knight's Tale*, the Jailer's Daughter increasingly saturates herself with the language of water once she frees Palamon. When he fails to stay "fast by a brook" (2.6.6) where she left him, never to directly interact with her again, the abandoned Jailer's Daughter describes her emotional state:

> I am moped.
> Food took I none these two days;
> Sipped some water. I have not closed mine eyes,
> Save when my lids scoured off their brine. Alas,
> Dissolve, my life! (3.2.25-9)

[41] Steve Mentz, "Shipwreck and Ecology: Toward a Structural Theory of Shakespeare and Romance," *International Shakespeare Yearbook* 8 (2008): 165-82, at 173.

No longer fetching water for her father's prisoner, she now consumes only water; her eyes become crusted in "brine;" and she calls for her life to "dissolve." When she declares herself "moped" (3.2.25), meaning bewildered or a fool, she uses a word that overlaps audibly with the household tool that absorbs liquid.[42] She defines herself in watery terms that recall her and Philostrate's shared labor, but her repeated statements of her own actions do not indicate the constant presence of some controlling authority: there is no force pulling a bucket or changing the weather. Her uncontrolled, overflowing feeling more closely resembles the "infinite teeres" that threaten Theseus's realm rather than the externally authorized "queynte geres" of Arcite's courtly love.

The association of characters with varying states of acceptable liquidity reflects a conception of the human body that persisted across these works. Humoralism, a system of understanding chiefly concerned with the proper balance of fluids, exists across the source and play: Arcite in his "manye" state in Thebes is "engendred of humour malencolik" (1375) in *The Knight's Tale*, while the Doctor in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* diagnoses a "melancholy humor" (5.2.38) infecting the Jailer's Daughter. The discourse of humoralism conceives of the body as an "irrigated container," according to Gail Kern Paster, with "porous and permeable" boundaries that prohibit the system from ever being completely sealed off from its environment.[43] Some

[42] (OED s.v. "mop," n.4) Oxford University Press, December 2014. The pun is not necessarily deliberate, but it does overlap audibly, a particularly important point for performance. In use since at least 1496, the word "mop" was probably a familiar as a household tool that soaked up liquid. The word itself, in a number or different iterations, seems to map onto a lower-class, working world, like that of the Jailer's Daughter. In *The Fair Maid of the Inn* (1640) which Fletcher coauthored with Ford, Webster, and Massinger, a clown comments that their cheating prospered "As long as we kept the Mop-headed butter-boxes sober" (2.2.98). In *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, vol. 10, ed. Fredson Bowers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Additionally, a female character name from this period, "Mopsa," likely associated with the working class nickname "Mopsy" (OED s.v. "mopsy," n.2, which also has associations with a dog), also belongs to the folk world of household tools like "mops." Sidney's *Arcadia* uses the name for a country girl, and in Robert Greene's English romance *Pandosto* (1588), Mopsa is a shepherd's wife. In *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare works from *Pandosto*, borrowing the name for a shepherdess character.

[43] Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 8, 13.

bodies, however, succeed in maintaining their boundaries more than others. Women's bodies particularly are not only "simply more liquid than men's" (29), but they also more frequently fail to control their liquids: "the weaker vessel" of the female body is also the "leaky vessel" (24). Paster cites early modern cultural and medical discourses that chronically conceive of the woman as secreting shameful fluids, displaying the "body as beyond the control of the female subject, and thus as threatening the acquisitive goals of family and its maintenance of status and power" (25). The unsanctioned loss of virginity is one of the threatening "leaks" to be stopped, with female chastity often illustrated "as a sieve that does not leak" (50).[44] Thus, the uncontrolled woman whose desires present a problem to established power structures might be described by this humoral discourse as "leaky." In *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, the Jailer's Daughter is such a "leaky" woman who resists confinement. She not only breaks Palamon out of prison, she boldly exhibits desire that traverses class lines and endangers standards of behavior for a chaste maid."What should I do to make him know I love him?" she ruminates, "For I would fain enjoy him" (2.4.29-30). Unlike Emilia, the Jailer's Daughter knows exactly which of the noblemen she loves. Arcite may be "fair as he too. / But in my heart was Palamon" (2.4.16-17). The crying, moped Jailer's Daughter creates "leakage" in the play, spilling uncontrolled feminine desire despite her father's management of her "business" (2.1.17).

Her own description of an imagined "leak" marks her mental movement away from the world ruled by her father and the Duke. In a speech infused with potential sexual meaning, she envisions first a ship, then its sinking, and finally fantasizes about sailing her own vessel:

> Yonder's the sea and there's a ship; how 't tumbles!
> And there's a rock lies watching under water;
> Now, now, it beats upon it; now, now, now!
> There's a leak sprung, a sound one! How they cry!

[44] Paster notes that this image, which derives from the Roman story of Tuccia's virginity test, is a repeating motif in portraits of Queen Elizabeth I, as catalogued by Roy Strong. See *The Body Embarrassed*, 50.

> Open her before the wind; you'll lose all else.
> Up with a course or two, and tack about, boys!
> Good night, good night; you're gone. - I am very hungry.
> Would I could find a fine frog; he would tell me
> News from all parts o' th' world; then would I make
> A carrack of a cockleshell, and sail
> By east and north-east to the king of pygmies,
> For he tells fortunes rarely. (3.4.5-16)

Foreshadowing her role as director of her subsequent nautical delusions, her mind constructs the ship, sinks it, then concocts a plan to "find a fine frog" and sail to the king of the pygmies.[45] If her sanity "leaks" away as her delusions become increasingly nautical and abstract, her own role in steering her imagination grows over the course of the speech. Correlating with her increasing imaginative power in the speech, her soliloquy quickly flows away from recognizable sanity. This "flood" of words suggests the verbosity of the "leaky woman," a discourse that, according to Paster, "characteristically links this liquid expressiveness to excessive verbal fluency."[46] Her body remains excessively full of water, as the indication of her hunger reminds the audience that she has not consumed solid food. The line that indicates the ship has been penetrated, "There's a leak sprung, a sound one!," marks the transition between worlds: a submersion into madness and a reference to the loss of virginity. Inspired by her watery associations, or perhaps subconsciously becoming lost in what Barbara Johnson might characterize as a "textual effect," critics repeatedly describe her relation to the frame story using corresponding metaphors: Bruster illustrates how her "mad coinage *floats* within the play," Raphael Lyne describes her as "*marooned* in her darkly comic subplot," and Kathryn Lynch speaks of a narrative that "*buoyantly* reimagines" the main plot.[47] Also responding to a certain "leakiness" apparent in the

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[45] Tracing this progression, Mentz notes that the shipwreck "mark[s] the boundary between realistic and artificial dramatic narratives." See "Shipwreck and Ecology," 175.
[46] Paster, *The Body Embarrassed*, 25.
[47] Bruster, "Politics of Madwomen's Language," 287, my emphasis, Raphael Lyne, *Shakespeare's Late Work* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 102, my emphasis, and Lynch, "The Three Noble Kinsmen," 87, my

character, Carol Thomas Neely notes that the Jailer's Daughter's reiterated images are "of an open, penetrable, metamorphic female body."[48] As exemplified by this vision of the leaking ship, the Jailer's Daughter links sexuality and madness with the language of a watery openness, creating a potential leak in the established structure of patriarchal control.

The watery Jailer's Daughter contrasts with the relatively "dry" portrayal of Emilia, the "unspilled sieve" in the play. Rather than feel excessively for either of the kinsmen, she is kept balanced and on track by equal governing pulls. Following the scene in which the Jailer's Daughter invites others to participate in her delusion of the ship, Emilia explains that she herself stays steady because she is pulled in two directions. If her brother asked her whom she loved, she "had run mad for Arcite; now, if my sister, more for Palamon" (4.2.48-9). *The Knight's Tale* teases but backs away from an association between water and Emelye with the occupatio of her bath: "Hir body wessh with water of a welle / But hou she dide hir ryte I dar nat telle" (2283-84). The narrator supplies the beginning of an erotic image of Emelye splashed with water, but then refuses to elaborate. Shakespeare and Fletcher, however, keep Emilia "above" water in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.[49] Instead, the Jailer's Daughter "fills" the occupatio through the description of her submersion "in the great lake that lies behind the palace" (4.1.53).[50] The Wooer describes her knee-deep in the water,

> her careless tresses,
> A wreath of bulrush rounded; about her stuck
> Thousand fresh water-flowers of several colours,

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emphasis. A subconscious adoption of the text's rhetoric would suggest that the text engulfs the reader, demonstrating Johnson's claim that when the reader is taken in, even "fooled" by a text, "the reader is in fact one of its effects." See *The Critical Difference: Essays in the Contemporary Rhetoric of Reading* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 143-44.

[48] Carol Thomas Neely, *Distracted Subjects: Madness and Gender in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 85.

[49] Arcite only describes "Queen Emilia" (3.1.4) as metaphorically more lovely than any riverbank blessed by a nymph: "We challenge too the bank of any nymph / That makes the stream seem flowers" (3.1.8-9).

[50] On the wooer "fishing" for the Jailer's Daughter to stop her drowning, see Green, "'A mad woman? We are made," 129.

That methought she appeared like the fair nymph
That feeds the lake with waters. (4.1.83-7)

The Wooer's speech sensuously blurs the division between nature and her body. With flowers "stuck" to her skin and "careless" hair circling the reeds, the Jailer's Daughter appears intricately woven into the environment. She forms an image of a *watery* woman that recurs across literary and artistic traditions. From Shakespeare's own canon, she reflects the drowned Ophelia, a representation of a female submerged in nature that later so interested the Pre-Raphaelite painters.[51] As recounted by Gertrude, "mermaid-like" Ophelia wore "fantastic garlands" of flowers as she lay in the water "like a creature native and indued / Unto that element" (4.7.168-80). Long before Ophelia, a woman intensely associated with water, a fairy by a fountain or a "fair nymph" by the lake, as the wooer calls the Jailer's Daughter, was a familiar figure in medieval romance.

**Romance and Water**

The motif of the fairy and the water draws largely from Celtic myth, continually associating a female figure with fluidity of many different kinds.[52] Closely linked to a sense of otherworldliness and erotic desire, these feminine beings are in many ways akin to the mad Jailer's Daughter, a character immersed in her own sexual, watery sphere.[53] Accessible by water,

[51] Pre-Raphaelites such as Sir John Everett Millais, Arthur Hughes and John William Waterhouse repeatedly painted Ophelia in or near water, dripping in flowers in sensuous poses and colors.

[52] Misty Rae Urban finds that this motif draws "from a well-developed body of Celtic myth that binds supernatural women to a pool, well, fountain, or spring where they, in pre-Christian times, most likely served as patron goddesses." Misty Rae Urban, "Magical Fountains in Middle English Romance," in *The Nature and Function of Water, Baths, Bathing, and Hygiene from Antiquity through the Renaissance*, ed. Cynthia Kosso and Anne Scott, Technology and Change in History 11 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 427-51, at 445.

[53] As Neil Cartlidge observes, "uncanny encounters with beautiful women at (or in) running water are by no means unusual in medieval literature, and they often provide a license for sexual fantasy." See "The Fairies in the Fountain: Promiscuous Liaisons?," in *The Exploitations of Medieval Romance*, by Laura Ashe, Ivana Djordjević, and Judith Weiss (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2010): 15-27, at 16.

this otherworld typically exists in opposition to the realm of court romance.[54] A similar dichotomy seems to be at work in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. When the Jailer's Daughter tries to leave the world where the noble Palamon will not love her, she attempts escape through a watery barrier: immediately after the Wooer finds her, "she straight sought the flood" (4.1.95). Thus, the Jailer's Daughter, though continually called a source-less character, again offers a means of connection to the world of the play's source. She engages with larger cultural patterns that persisted throughout Chaucer, Shakespeare and Fletcher's time alike.

Not banished to a faraway past, the romance maintained an enduring popularity in early modern England.[55] The persistence of such aspects of medieval life formed the associational map of Shakespeare and Fletcher's world, creating a corresponding literal and metaphorical geography with Chaucer's era; as Cooper claims, a time traveler from Chaucer's London to Shakespeare's might find "a bewildering mix of the familiar and the disorienting…but they would not have got lost."[56] What these authors share, then, transcends the limits of an assumed source text. The "medieval world," like the Fleet under London, actively flows beneath their contemporary surroundings. These medieval foundations, in turn, draw on their own formative influences. The otherworldly, transformative fairy waters of Breton *lais* and Celtic myth, for

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[54] In her analysis of *Lanval*, Amy N. Vines argues that the fairy mistress inhabits a supernatural world on the other side of the stream, "separate from the real, Arthurian world in which the romance's action takes place… Unencumbered by any male relationships, she is beholden to none of the social and cultural constraints of a real medieval woman." See *Women's Power in Late Medieval Romance* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2011), 128. Corrine Saunders finds that Chaucer plays with the motif of the otherworldly women in *The Wife of Bath's Tale* and *The Tale of Sir Thopas.* His "playful treatment of the otherworldly lady and her pursuit of love affirms the familiarity and potential of this motif for romance writers. Like the enchantress herself, the themes associated with her – gender, love and desire – shift and change their shape within individual works as well as across romance writing." See *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2010), 193.

[55] In tracing the enduring significance of the genre, Cooper finds that "romance had been the principal form of secular fiction for some four hundred years, from the mid-twelfth century forwards, and it dominated the Middle Ages and Tudor England rather as novels dominated the nineteenth century." See *Shakespeare and the Medieval World*, 172.

[56] Ibid., 11-12. Cooper finds that "England's topography, infrastructure and rhythms of life were still essentially medieval" (1-2). While London's own geography would be quite similar, reoccurring folkloric motifs would perhaps be especially familiar in rural areas outside of London, such as Stratford.

instance, converge in the medieval romance, conceptualizing water as transitional and shape-shifting.[57] Repeatedly marking the intersecting, liminal space between different worlds, water in these stories offers a way to visualize and verbalize a shared cultural "reservoir" through time.[58]

Conceptions of water's fluidity and instability, of course, do not belong exclusively to *The Two Noble Kinsmen* or to medieval romance; maintaining a steady supply of useable water likely required daily attention in the premodern era, perhaps causing the resource to continually be on the mind as a ready metaphor.[59] Shakespeare's own relationship to water has long fascinated critics.[60] Long ago, Caroline Spurgeon, for example, posited that floods particularly fascinated Shakespeare; she speculates that memories of the overflowing River Avon supplied "a perfect analogy to the result of stress or rush of emotion in men."[61] From *The Comedy of Errors*

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[57] Urban observes that the presence of water in the medieval romance, "draws from an impressive array of sources literary and popular, mythic and historic, and compresses them into an image fluid in purpose, abundant in meaning." See "Magical Fountains in Middle English Romance," 451. An early modern evocation of this motif would thus engage with a similarly fluid relationship with many previous sources that inform the cultural environment of its obvious source.

[58] In a recent essay, Mark Houlahan examines Shakespeare's own status as "a great reservoir of story" (165). Borrowing a term from Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, Houlahan suggests that stories arise from the living "sea of stories, the ocean of notions" (158) and encourages "fluidifying our sense of Shakespeare's storytelling, returning him to the sea of Renaissance storytelling in which he was immersed" (159). See "Shakespeare and the Sea of Stories," in *Storytelling: Critical and Creative Approaches*, ed. Jan Shaw, Philippa Kelly, and L. E. Semler (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013): 157-66, at 159. Drawing from the work of scholars like Cooper, I would add that this "sea" can be quite medieval in content.

[59]For example, as a demarcation of dichotomous properties and inconstancy, water functions as an especially apt metaphor for madness across history. Analyzing Antipholus's potential madness in a speech full of water imagery in *The Comedy of Errors*, Robert Viking O'Brien invokes Foucault's work on the Ship of Fools. Foucault writes that these European vessels, which gathered madmen from towns and conveyed them down rivers and canals, were "highly symbolic ships filled with the senseless in search of their reason." Surveying the motif across literary history, Foucault concludes that "one thing is certain: the link between water and madness is deeply rooted in the dream of the Western man." See, *History of Madness*, 10. O'Brien summarizes that "according to Foucault, it either begins with the ritual of the mad ships, or the ships themselves reflect an older cultural pattern." See "The Madness of Syracusan Antipholus," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 2 (1996): 5.

[60] Studies of Shakespeare's relationship to the sea include Alexander Frederick Falconer, *Shakespeare and the Sea* (London: Constable, 1964), Steve Mentz, *At the Bottom of Shakespeare's Ocean* (London: Continuum, 2009), and Daniel Brayton, *Shakespeare's Ocean* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012).

[61] Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us*, reprinted ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935; Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 93. Spurgeon asserts that "there can be no question that the flooded river, swollen and raging, overflowing its banks and veering all before it, was one of the—probably recurrent—sights of boyhood which made the most indelible impression on Shakespeare's imagination." In counting Shakespeare's many uses of this image, she concludes that this "marked interest in a river in flood is quite peculiar" compared to other Elizabethan dramatists (92-94). G. Wilson Knight also finds that for Shakespeare the image of the flood is

to *The Tempest*, Shakespeare's plays draw from a wide variety of traditions that engage with the imagery of water and particularly the sea. *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, though, proves particularly interesting in the way that charting metaphorical and literal water significantly deepens the relationship of the play to its named source. The striking nautical language of the play cannot find direct precedent in the events of *The Knight's Tale*, but Chaucer's presentation of feeling, particularly female feeling, corresponds with notions of liquidity. In the general structure of medieval romance, a body of water can serve as the geographic "mixing" point before a solidified ending, when all ends as it should: a shared site of interaction and inversion that suggests that boundaries can be fluid, at least before an inevitable ending.[62] It is at these fluid moments when texts seem especially prone to communicate. The fairies and fountains motif, for example, can form "the centre of a nucleus of apparently shared or borrowed material," according to Neil Cartlidge, used by both high romance and the dirty, darkly funny form of the fabliau, which mocks and explores the banned possibilities of that idealized, romantic world.[63] Perhaps no medieval text represents such a space for the convergence of such conflicting "types" of stories more explicitly than Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* as a whole.

**"Quiting" the Knight's Tale**

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"clearer than any image of water breaking its bounds is an apt symbol for disorder." See *The Shakespearian Tempest*, 3rd ed. (London: Methuen, 1953), 23. For more on Shakespeare's use of water imagery, see also Wolfgang Clemen, *The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery*, 2nd ed. (London: Methuen, 1977). William Poole examines Shakespeare's penchant for associating a more general metaphor of water with characters threatened by the loss of personality. When characters use the language of water, tears, and melting, Poole argues that "their very syntax seems to float, to become inexact or ambiguous." See "All at Sea: Water, Syntax, and Character Dissolution in Shakespeare," *Shakespeare Survey* 54 (2001): 201-12, at 201.

[62] Urban finds that "magical wells and fountains serve as the structural centerpiece where all the threads of the story cross and are drawn together. The fountain signals the hero's changing psychic and social state and acts as signpost, even allegory, for his ritual indoctrination into an idealized romance world." See "Magical Fountains," 450-51.

[63] Cartlidge, "The Fairies in the Fountain," 18. Cartlidge suggests a relationship between the different generic works *Lanval* and *Le Chevalier qui fist les cons parler*, centered around fountains and fairies, that recalls a dynamic like that of the First Fragment: Cartlidge asks, if they are twins of sorts, "what would that say about the pretensions to a distinct refinement of sensibility that Marie's *Lais* so clearly express? Is the *Chevalier* simply a parody of *Lanval*? Or is there any sense in which *Lanval* implicitly provokes a response of this kind?" (18-19).

Even if he initially wrote it separately, Chaucer does not choose for *The Knight's Tale* to stand alone.[64] Instead, he groups the romance together with the diverse tales of many other pilgrims who begin their storytelling at the "Wateryng of Seint Thomas" (826). The multiple voices of *The Canterbury Tales* use generic conventions to "quite" what precedes them, most notably the foundational first tale. The importance of this interplay cautions against considering any tale in isolation from the others.[65] In addition to offering material for imitation and parody to the other pilgrims, *The Knight's Tale* opens possibilities to the future tales in what it excludes. Elizabeth Scala argues that "we might more accurately say that *The Canterbury Tales* originates as much in what the Knight cannot say as in what he can."[66] In scaling down Statian epic and classical sources, the Knight's omission of particular subjects and discourses allows contradictory elements to arise from both the tale's content and the unspoken, opened-up space. While the Knight "dar nat telle" of Emelye's "body wessh with water of a welle," for example, Scala finds that *The Miller's Tale* "certainly emphasizes many aspects of 'romance' neglected by the Knight, particularly the carnal desires of its characters and these desires' decidedly physical manifestations" (124). How might the "illicit" possibilities opened up by *The Knight's Tale* and developed in the "quiting" responses, so inherent to the structure of the *Tales*, translate to the play that names Chaucer as its source? These purposeful exclusions—madness, excessive

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64 On the independent origin of the *Knight's Tale* and its complex integration with other *Tales*, see Elizabeth Scala, *Absent Narratives, Manuscript Textuality, and Literary Structure in Late Medieval England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), esp. 100-102.

65 The relationship between *The Knight's Tale* and the other *Tales*, especially in the First Fragment, is well-trodden territory for scholars. For example, Thomas J. Farrell, tracking conceptions of privacy across the First Fragment, says that many aspects of this relationship "are by now commonplace." See "Privacy and the Boundaries of Fabliau in The Miller's Tale," *ELH* 56 (1989): 773-95, at 786.

66 Scala, *Absent Narratives*, 125.

emotion, and erotic, feminine desire—which often belong to the realm of lower comedy, seem to seep into the romance frame of the play, creating some strange generic results.[67]

Both *The Knight's Tale* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* share in common the concluding juxtaposition of wedding and death, yet the tale manages to maintain more tonal consistency relative to the play's jarring switches between tragic and comic conventions. The Prologue of Shakespeare and Fletcher's *The Two Noble Kinsmen* claims a "fear" of shaking Chaucer's bones with "witless chaff," but from its first line, "New plays and maidenheads are near akin" (Prologue 1, 21, 19), it embraces bawdy jokes. If the play, as judged by Frey, "does not fit well with the other 'Romances'" of Shakespeare's late career," it also strains against a straight "romance" reading of *The Knight's Tale*.[68] Instead, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* seems to channel the "quiting" movements of the *Tales* in its oscillating, tragicomic genre.[69] The Jailer's Daughter's tragically adversarial yet bodily comic presence especially distills this effect. In performance, she elicits both sympathy and laughter on the stage, personifying the strange tragicomic blend of the play itself.[70] Earlier criticism blaming the inconsistency of feeling for

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[67] This is not to argue that Chaucer's individual stories strictly fall into simple categories, never mixing elements of different genres within them. For more on how the sacred runs deep under the sexual in the fabliau stories, for example, see Rodney Delasanta, "The Mill in Chaucer's 'Reeve's Tale,'" *The Chaucer Review* 36, (2002): 270-76. The use of humor in *The Knight's Tale* has long been noted as well. See Edward E Foster, "Humor in the 'Knight's Tale.'" *The Chaucer Review* 3.2 (1968): 88-94. My own argument draws on the larger emotional difference between the continual "sorwe" and "infinite" "teeres" (2829) of *The Knight's Tale* and the laughing townspeople (3849) and pilgrims (3855) in *The Miller's Tale*, and the squires who trick the Miller "oonly for hire myrthe and revelrye," (4005) in *The Reeve's Tale*.

[68] Frey, introduction to *Shakespeare, Fletcher and* The Two Noble Kinsmen, 2.

[69] The most "commonplace" critical insight about the play's generic designation, as summarized by Sanders, is that it "begins with a wedding and a funeral in the first act…and ends with the same inhospitable combination in the fifth." See "Mixed Messages," 448. The disparate nature of these two ceremonies, of course, not only reflects generic conventions (death in tragedy, wedding in comedy), but also signals the opposite fates of the two eponymous characters.

[70] See n. 6 for more on her performance reception. That this character, something from outside *The Knight's Tale* frame, is theatrically appealing is perhaps unsurprising when we consider Thompson's claim that *The Knight's Tale* is "more obviously suited to a narrative medium than a dramatic one." See *Shakespeare's Chaucer*, 167. The other *Tales*, though, seem to be more inherently theatrical. *The Miller's Tale* is especially concerned with drama in its parodying of the structural patterns of Mystery plays. For more on how *The Miller's Tale* "games" with the structure of the Mystery plays, see Rowland, "The Play of the 'Miller's Tale': A Game within a Game," *The Chaucer Review* 5, (1970): 140-146.

both this character and the play on the two-author collaboration heard different voices competing within the one work. More than just a failure or incidental byproduct of the play, the felt tension between these collaborative voices could instead echo the collective effect of the multiple narrators of *The Canterbury Tales*.

The direct reference to the "noble breeder" then aids the playwrights in creating the play's choppy "tone." On Chaucer's Renaissance reputation, Thompson posits that "Chaucer the philosophical poet and Chaucer the teller of bawdy stories were confused in the often ambiguous references to him in the literature of the time."[71] Chaucer, then, represented both the serious, noble romance, and the raunchy comedy in Shakespeare and Fletcher's era. Scholarship, though, resists associating the "bawdy Chaucer" with *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. If such a Chaucer infected the playwrights, critics generally ensure that noble Shakespeare remains immune by assigning the "comic and superficial" aspects to Fletcher.[72] Fletcher indeed knew the later stories of the *Tales* well, as evidenced by his dramatic adaptations of them. Furthermore, he and Shakespeare probably never knew Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale* without the context provided by the other *Tales*.[73] When adapting the romance, they likely encountered it surrounded by the other tales in Thomas Speght's folio edition of *The Workes of our Antient and lerned English Poet, Geffrey Chavcer*.[74] No matter which of the possible editions Shakespeare and Fletcher actually

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[71] Thompson, *Shakespeare's Chaucer*, 171-72.

[72] Ibid., 172. Thompson claims that Shakespeare "seems to see something very serious, not to say gloomy, in *The Knight's Tale*, while Fletcher, who used *The Wife of Bath's Tale* elsewhere, exploits the more comic and superficial elements of the story such as absurdity and suspense" Fletcher "keeps deflating the tragic potential of his material by his comic remarks and ironic perspective, whereas Shakespeare refrains from doing this and the result is profoundly serious" (214).

[73]Fletcher previously collaborated on a dramatic reworking of *The Franklin's Tale* called "Triumph of Honor" in *Four Plays, or Moral Representations, in One* and would also work on an adaptation of *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, entitled *Woman Pleased*. For more on Fletcher's work on these plays, see Cooper, "Jacobean Chaucer: *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and Other Chaucerian Plays," in *Refiguring Chaucer in the Renaissance*, ed. Theresa M. Krier (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998).

[74] When writing *The Two Noble Kinsmen* Shakespeare and Fletcher likely would have read Chaucer in the 1598 Speght edition, later augmented in 1602. For more on this, see Teramura, "Anxiety and *Auctoritas*," 544-45. In her

worked from—the 1598 or 1602 Speght, or perhaps an earlier 1561 edition—all the collections visibly group *The Knight's Tale* with the subsequent tales.[75] In all these editions, an image of a Knight riding a horse marks the start of the tales (f. 1), but then no page or illustration separates *The Knight's Tale* from the other stories. In the 1561 and 1598 collections, the first tale concludes with an indication of what will come next: "Here endeth the Knightes tale, and here followeth the Millers Prologue" (f. 10). The 1602 edition does not share this connecting inscription, but *The Miller's Tale* begins on a page facing the final page of *The Knight's Tale* (f. $10^{v}$-11), so that a reader could not finish the first tale without seeing the beginning of the next. The evidence of how well Shakespeare knew Chaucer, Thompson claims, exists "in the very looseness of his adaptation. He is able to pick out details from several different places," rather than just copying scene for scene, but she reflects the scholarly consensus by confining the potential works from which Shakespeare and Fletcher "pick" for *The Two Noble Kinsmen* to *The Knight's Tale*.[76] When the Prologue of the play imagines Chaucer lamenting "the witless chaff of such a writer" that lightens "my famed works" (Prologue 20), the context created by the other tales invites, even necessitates, a consideration of his "works" in the larger collection.

Source studies of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* mostly disregard the Jailer's Daughter's plot because their attention focuses on the main story told by Chaucer's Knight. A more

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recent article, Hannah Crawforth calls the playwright's relationship an "unusually close engagement with the play's Chaucerian source, in an edition published by Thomas Speght in 1602." See "'Bride-habited, but maiden-hearted': Language and Gender in The Two Noble Kinsmen," in *Women Making Shakespeare: Text, Reception and Performance*, by Gordon McMullan, Lena Cowen Orlin, and Virginia Mason Vaughan (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2014), 26. Cooper notes that Shakespeare probably encountered the works for the first time in the 1561 See *Shakespeare and the Medieval World*, 205.

[75] These editions, all of which were viewed at The Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, include *The workes of Geffrey Chaucer*. London: Ihon Kyngston for Ihon Wight. (1561), STC 5075, *The workes of our antient and lerned English poet, Geffrey Chaucer, newly printed.* London: Adam Islip. (1598). STC 5077, and *The workes of our antient and lerned English poet, Geffrey Chaucer, newly printed.* London: Adam Islip. (1602). STC 5080. The Speght editions feature an introductory letter to Thomas Speght from Fletcher's frequent writing partner, Francis Beaumont.

[76] Thompson, *Shakespeare's Chaucer*, 218. Thompson sees all the comic potential of *The Knight's Tale*, and possibly by extension of her argument all of the First Fragment, as channeled into *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

comprehensive definition of "Chaucerian," though, recognizes this seemingly excrescent character. Describing the structure of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, Neely observes that "the play appends to an inherited classical story of elite males…a second plot featuring a lower-class madwoman who is characterized as English and contemporary."[77] This "Englishness" among the classical aligns her with Chaucer's own authorial project. To an early modern audience in 1613, according to Bruster, "the Jailer's Daughter must have represented both the countryside and the Elizabethan past," in contrast to the Schoolmaster's male-gendered Latin which "signals a harmfully wrong 'fit' with her situation and with the cultural forces she represents."[78] Her English folk identity among the Latin, most obviously on display in the morris dance scene, recalls not only Chaucer's own English retelling of *The Knight's Tale* but also the relationship of the "lower" village stories to the Knight's Latinate classicizing narration in the First Fragment. Thompson's evaluation of the scene is that "there is very little Chaucer here," but the character's correspondence to an English medieval past functioning with and yet apart from the classical feels quite Chaucerian.[79]

Contemporary critical conversations seem to push for such an expanded view of Chaucer's presence in Renaissance texts. Most recently in regard to the Jailer's Daughter, for example, Margaret Rogerson finds "clear precedent for [the subplot] in the structure of the opening sequence of Chaucer's story-telling contest in the *fabliaux* tales"[80] When viewed as

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[77] Neely, *Distracted Subjects*, 83.

[78] Bruster, "Politics of Madwomen's Language," 288, 298. Bruster also argues that in addition to embodying this historical resonance, the Jailer's Daughter creates contemporary cultural connections for Shakespeare and Fletcher's audience.

[79] Thompson, *Shakespeare's Chaucer*, 192. In support of the morris dance being a "Chaucerian" aspect of the text, Cooper observes that it "elaborates on Chaucer's 'observaunces' of May." See *Shakespeare and the Medieval World*, 227.

[80] Margaret Rogerson, "Reading Chaucer 'in Parts': *The Knight's Tale* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*," in *Storytelling: Critical and Creative Approaches*, 170. This idea makes isolated appearances in a few other recent essays, as well. In a parenthetical comment, Lynch finds that *The Miller's Tale*, as a reply to the Knight, offers "in some ways a rough parallel to the subplot of the Jailer's Daughter." In viewing the competitive relationship between

occupying a space akin to the competing, subversive "lower" tales, the Jailer's Daughter is no longer only a mad woman clumsily appended to Chaucer's story. Instead, she inherits the tales' "quiting" power. Entering the company of the countrymen singing about a ship (3.5.60), the Jailer's Daughter calls the Schoolmaster a "tinker." Reminiscent of her vision of the "leak sprung" from the last time she appeared on stage, she tells him to "stop no more holes but what you should" (3.5.84). Before her arrival, the Schoolmaster uses watery language to describe women: he commands the maids to dance pleasingly and "swim with your bodies" (3.5.29), then tells a Countryman that women are like slippery eels that must be held "by th' tail / And with thy teeth" (3.5.50-51). The troupe of countrymen initially delight ("We are made, boys" [3.5.77]) in adding "a dainty madwoman, / as mad as a March hare" to their dance, because "she'll do the rarest gambols" (3.5.73-76). Her "rarest gambol" turns out to be a statement of power. When the Schoolmaster commands the Countryman to "take her / And fluently persuade her to a peace" (3.5.87-88) by dancing with her, the Jailer's Daughter issues a command that he obeys: "I'll lead" (3.5.91). "Unhinged" from the main plot, she becomes a separate, commanding voice within Theseus's realm.

By embodying a "quiting" position within *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, the Jailer's Daughter threatens the totality of Theseus's control. Viewing Theseus's order in the play as ultimately absolute, Susan Green claims that "the potency of the Shakespeare/Fletcher collaboration" lies in knowing the need for a distant yet controlled passion, which "reaches deeply into the fissures of

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*The Knight's Tale* and *The Miller's Tale*, Lynch argues that there is "poetic paternity" in the Middle Ages for the inherent competition and substitution between Fletcher and Shakespeare, and subsequently Shakespeare, Fletcher, and Chaucer that she reads in the play. *The Miller's Tale* thus shows the authors that "such requital could be the soul of art." See "The Three Noble Kinsmen," 87. Recognizing the play's "use of class comedy to comment on a spectrum of attitudes to love," Julia Ruth Briggs identifies this strategy as "thoroughly Chaucerian," recalling "the paraodic juxtaposition" of the stories of the First Fragment, available in both *Two Noble Kinsmen* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* See "'Chaucer…the Story Gives': *Troilus and Cressida* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*," *Shakespeare and the Middle* Ages: 161-77, at 170. The cumulative effect of these collected observations invites the subsequent stories of the First Fragment to attach to *The Knight's Tale* in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, grouping them as they would have been encountered in the Speght collection.

Chaucer's story until it finds the 'maidenhead'—the play itself, singing the achievements of Theseus."[81] The Jailer's Daughter provides an outlet required for Theseus's control, Green argues, keeping wildness distant but always contained. This might be true, if *The Knight's Tale* was Chaucer's final word. Chaucer, though, deliberately parodies and contradicts conceptions such complete "achievements" of authority, especially in the tales that immediately follow the foundational romance. The stories, and accordingly the Jailer's Daughter, explore what the Knight "dar nat telle."

**Millers, Reeves, and Leaks**

*The Miller's Tale* and *The Reeve's Tale*, in ways akin to *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, take *The Knight's Tale* as an initial "source" text, choosing what to incorporate, parody, and adapt. If the subsequent tales do not directly supply dialogue to the play, their position as peripheral yet integral parts of the whole sets a precedent for the plot "exterior" to the *Knight's Tale* storyline in the play. Like these fabliau tales, the Jailer's Daughter responds to the impossibilities of the *Knight's Tale* frame within *The Two Noble Kinsmen* humorously and erotically. Though some might recoil, the audience quite feasibly laughs when the (potentially quack) Doctor instructs the Wooer to dress as Palamon and "please her appetite" (5.2.36) to "cure" the Jailer's Daughter. Such a deception, a comic bed trick, could not exist in *The Knight's Tale*.[82] There the substitution of Palamon for Arcite occurs against a backdrop of serious grief, with Emelye's knowledge, if not her assent. Rather, such a scene seems to emerge from responses to this impossibility in *The Knight's Tale*. *The Reeve's Tale*, for example, features a comic bed trick. After the Miller's Wife "wente hire out to pisse" (4215), she seeks the cradle that marks her bed,

[81] Green, "'A mad woman? We are made," 130-31.

[82] Cooper also calls the cure "a process too reminiscent of the bed-trick to be comfortable." See *Shakespeare and the Medieval World*, 231. Rogerson comments on how *The Miller's Tale* and *The Reeve's Tale* "involve trickery in the bedroom…where the trick turns partly on mistaken identities as in the case of the Jailor's Daughter and her nameless suitor in *The Kinsmen*." See "Reading Chaucer 'in Parts,'" 170.

which the clerk John moved near his own. Getting in, she "thoghte noght but good, / By cause that the cradel by it stood" (4221-4), and subsequently John, mistaken for her husband, "priketh harde and depe as he were mad" (4231). Madness here, as in the "cure" scene of the play, is associated with physical desire in an explicitly comic and sexual way, disallowed in *The Knight's Tale* and in the directly inherited main plot of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.

Beyond madness, the persistent liquid imagery in *The Reeve's Tale* also marks the presence of female sexuality and the realities of the body: discourses actively excluded from *The Knight's Tale*. *The Reeve's Tale* portrays a patriarch "quited" by his inability to control the "leakage" of the female bodies of his household. Transgressions of the Miller's power overlap with female bodily leaks. His "somdel smoterlich" wife, first described "as digne as water in a dich" (3963-4), goes to bed, "hir joly whistle wel ywet" (4155) with ale, ventures out to "pisse," returns to find the cradle where she "yeve the child to sowke" (4157) moved, then mistakenly has the "so myrie a fit" (4230) with John. Meanwhile, jeopardizing the blood "lynage" (4272) over which Symkyn obsesses, the daughter not only "swonken[s] al the longe nyght" (4235), with Aleyn, but also assists her "deere lemman" (4240) in the deception of her father. Just as the Jailer's Daughter helps Palamon escape from her father, the Miller's daughter aids Aleyn in his deception of her father, telling him where

> Thou shalt a cake of half a busshel fynde
> That was ymaked of thyn owene mele,
> Which that I heelp my sire for to stele.
> And, goode lemman, God thee save and kepe!"
> And with that word almoost she gan to wepe. (4244-8)

Helping her beloved and parting with him near tears, the Miller's daughter offers a portrait of female deception against the patriarch's position and profession. The female members of the household become the "leaks" where the "quiting" occurs in *The Reeve's Tale*. A woman

crossing such boundaries of the home, Paster observes, is a potential social leak, "even potentially a flood," and that "we can perceive in the construction of women as leaky vessels the powerful interests of patriarchal ideology."[83] The First Fragment explicitly portrays "leaks" by female bodies, a discourse of female agency actively prohibited in *The Knight's Tale*. The Jailer's Daughter embodies this underlying anxiety in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*; she is no leak-proof sieve. *The Knight's Tale* sets a precedent for water metaphors expressing threatening emotion, but the Jailer's Daughter's watery associations seems to extend beyond the "blubbered queens" (1.1.180) to draw from a different genre. What is "teeres" in *The Knight's Tale* becomes all different kind of "leaks" in the First Fragment which express excess female sexuality, even power. Concurrent with her introduction of true irrationality into Theseus's realm, the Jailer's Daughter's deliberate, class-crossing, feminine desire for Palamon establishes a passion more sexually threatening than the court-sanctioned adoration of the nobles.[84]

If *The Knight's Tale* hints at excessive, teary feeling and sets up a contrast of "loveris maladye" and "manye," *The Miller's Tale* directly features both a delusional character and a woman who exhibits feeling and desire. Nicholas, the clerk staying with the carpenter John and his much younger wife, Alison, fakes a long trance, warns the carpenter "that if thou wreye me, thou shalt be wood" (3507), then pretends to foretell a flood worse than Noah's. John fully believes this story, much to the delight of the townspeople who definitively declare him mad.[85]

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[83] Paster, *The Body Embarrassed*, 46, 63.

[84] Critics often note the marked difference between her love and that of the noblemen. Cooper finds that "the cousins' much-vaunted love for Emilia by contrast comes across as shallow" in comparison to the passion of the Jailer's Daughter. See *Shakespeare and the Medieval World*, 231. Frey comments that "nobility comes to seem more a matter of ideals in social ordering remote from the origins of desire." See "Grinning at the Moon" in *Shakespeare, Fletcher and* The Two Noble Kinsmen:109-20, at 119.

[85] For more on John's "madness" see M.F. Vaughan, "Chaucer's Imaginative One-Day Flood," *Philological Quarterly* 60 (1981):117-23. Vaughan explores John's "mechanical imagination, a faculty over which he exerts no control." He argues that "since his imagination is a faculty in an uncritical and undiscriminating mind, the competing images stored in it have equal authority and equal claim to validity" (117). Additionally, it should be noted that other plays by Shakespeare also feature characters who are perhaps not "truly" mad, but only called mad,

At the conclusion of the tale, when Alison and Nicholas "tolden every man that [John] was wood" (3833), "the folk gan laughen at his fantasye; / And turned al his harm unto a jape" (3841-2). In Chaucer's story, unreturned desire and a tenuous grasp on reality in a low-class setting generates laughs. On the surface level alone, this sets a precedent for the Jailer's Daughter strange comic madness, the ostensibly "un-Chaucerian" presence, akin here to the perception of madness in the First Fragment.

Furthermore, John's tubs and the imagined flood are, like the Jailer's Daughter's most significant delusions, nautical. Terrified that the great flood will take his young wife, the jealous carpenter begins to lose his grasp on reality:

> Lo, which a greet thyng is affeccioun!
> Men may dyen of ymaginacioun,
> So depe may impressioun be take.
> This sely carpenter bigynneth quake;
> Hym thynketh verraily that he may see
> Noees flood come walwynge as the see
> To drenchen Alisoun, his hony deere.
> He wepeth, weyleth, maketh sory cheere. (3611-8)

Spurred by his imagination of "Noees flood come walwynge as the see" and terrified by the prospect of a "drenchen Alisoun," the husband "so ful of jalousie" (3294) takes the recommended precautionary steps. Water here marks a transitional space not only between the worlds of sanity and madness, but also an intersection of stories drawing on this metaphor. The Jailer's Daughter continually seems to "leak" out of the vessel of *The Knight's Tale* that flows from multiple literary sources. Ovid's Ariadne lamenting Theseus's departure, a story also found in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, can supply an obvious reference for a discarded woman's

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like Malvolio. Neely draws a distinction between characters who posses true madness and those who are called mad and restrained for their misogynistic behavior: "Because these characters are not mad but maddened, they lack the self-representation and sympathy we have earlier seen granted to Ophelia, Lear, Lady Macbeth, and the Jailer's Daughter." See *Distracted Subjects*, 138. I argue that her tragic madness is complicated by her "cure," the oscillating tone of the play, and her class, which allow potential parallels to the comically "mad(dened)," such as John. While the Jailer's Daughter's madness does earn "sympathy," she seems to combine elements of these two categories by also eliciting laughter in performance. See n. 6 for more on her perception in performance.

obsession with the sea. Yet the significance of a character who "thynketh verraily that he may see / Noees flood come walwynge as the see" in the story that directly accompanies the acknowledged source also provides an important allusion. Ariadne's purely tragic status as the betrayed daughter of the King of Crete places her on a much higher social plane than the Jailer's Daughter. With the transformation from sanity to madness generally reserved for higher class characters on the Renaissance stage, *The Miller's Tale* features a comic story of such a transition. With the scenes of Arcite's "manye" cut from the play, this emphasis on the dangerous imagination in *The Knight's Tale* and its potentially comic responses spills into *The Two Noble Kinsmen* by way of the Jailer's Daughter.[86] This particular image of madness, an obsession with a boat and imagined, flooding waters in a comic, low class context supplements the presentation of madness in the play. After all, she casts herself as the "miller's mare" (5.2.67) to Palamon's noble horse.

*The Miller's Tale*, while providing an analogue case of madness, also sets up a distinction between the different genders' relative "power" over water. The water motifs of the tale, Anne Scott argues, act as "leveling devices" to reveal "the pragmatic animal instincts that have any of us either lusting after another man's wife or crying out for water to sooth a scalded 'towte."[87] Yet this "flattening" fails; water only visibly "levels" the men of the story. They fear and require water, but it never comes under their complete control. While images of watery female sexuality can convey uncontrollable "leaks" in patriarchal structure, Paster finds that water associated with men can represent power: "the production of potent male water is often legitimated and

[86] For more on the potential connection between John's "fantasye" and Arcite's "manye," and how "men may dyen of ymaginacioun" throughout the First Fragment, see Tasioulas, "'Dying of imagination' in the First Fragment": 213-35.
[87] Scott, "Come Hell or High Water," 424.

rationalized as a function of female thirst."[88] Such power proves noticeably absent in *The Miller's Tale*, where men never seem to have access to water in the way that they desire or require. Motivated by the threat of "reyn…so wilde and wood" (3517) that could "drenchen Alisoun," John hangs tubs to survive a flood that never materializes. Alison's "thirst" for John does not exist, and neither does his flood. He assumes "now comth Nowelis flood!" (3818) after Nicholas cries desperately for "Water! as he were wood" (3817), but no flood absorbs his fall when "doun gooth al" (3821). Rather than replicate the smooth vertical movement of the courtly lover's "boket in a welle," with still water waiting below, his tub violently crashes to the ground, laying him out "aswowne" (3823).

Alison, meanwhile, never requires water but rather seems to posses some kind of command over it: Nicholas declares that without her he will "spille" (3278), while Absolon wishes to be drier after an encounter with Alison's "nether ye," rubbing his lips "with dust, with sond, with straw, with clooth, with chippes" (3748). Her sexual preference works not just in opposition to her husband, but also to that of "courtly love." Alison's trickery against the tale's parody of the epitome of the courtly lover, Shannon Forbes argues, shows that her predicates "do not align with the courting scene Absolon had previously envisioned." As with the Jailer's Daughter, her trajectory does not "fit" the storyline of courtly love. Alison's power grows when she successfully convinces the town of her husband's madness, leading Forbes to conclude that the tale illustrates an "identity that women can perform when they step outside the dominant cultural discourse and define their sense of self and identity on their own terms."[89] In the end,

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[88] Paster, *The Body Embarrassed*, 58.

[89] Shannon Forbes, "'To Alisoun Now Wol I Tellen Al My Love-Longing': Chaucer's Treatment of The Courtly Love Discourse in The Miller's Tale," *Women's Studies* 36 (2007): 9, 14. In a different interpretation of Alison's ambiguous fate, Elizabeth Edwards argues that Alison is not punished "since women are commodified and hoarded, explicitly in terms of their exchange value," so she "is not available to the ethics which apply to exchangers." See "Economics of Justice," *Dalhousie Review* 82 (2002): 91-112, at 112.

John is “aswowne,” “and Absolon hath kist hir nether ye, / And Nicholas is scalded in the towte” (3852-53), but the pilgrims hear nothing of Alison. Even if the statement about female independence offered by *The Miller’s Tale* is not as definitive as Forbes argues, Alison’s fate does remain uncertain at the conclusion despite John’s earlier attempts to “contain” her. Similarly, the Jailer Daughter’s open-ended madness, distinct from what ails Palamon and Arcite, also resists explicit closure within Theseus’s authority, and even within the single text of the play itself.

**Directing Her Ship**

But just what kind of “power” is this? If Alison and the Jailer’s Daughter share similarities as women whose “extraneous” sexuality threatens existing structures, their sanity within their respective worlds ultimately differs. Unable to be with Palamon in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, the Jailer’s Daughter goes mad. At the culmination of her delusions, in the the most literal staging of “watery madness” in Shakespeare, she directs a nautical drama. Water again seems to form the metaphorical locale for the connecting, liminal space between textual and metaphorical worlds, perhaps parodying works like *The Tempest* while also recalling John’s nautical delusions. She demands of her father,

> DAUGHTER: You are master of a ship?
> JAILER: Yes.
> DAUGHTER: Where’s your compass?
> JAILER: Here.
> DAUGHTER: Set it to th’ north.
> And now direct your course to th’ wood, where Palamon
> Lies longing for me. For the tackling,
> Let me alone; come, weigh, my hearts, cheerily!
> ALL: [*severally*] Ugh! Ugh! Ugh!
> ‘Tis up!—The wind’s fair!—Top the bowline!—
> Out with the mainsail!—Where’s your whistle, master? (4.1.141-48)

Unlike the carpenter, the Jailer's Daughter directs a crew that follows her words. Commanding the route of her fantasized ship, she orders her father, the patriarchal figure from whom her very name derives and the ostensible "master" of the ship, to "direct your course to th' woods." She steers her imaginary vessel towards her sexual desire, to where Palamon "lies longing for me." Her irrationality within Theseus's realm begins to extend beyond solitary delusion when others join her "crew." Like John cutting down his tub, fully expecting to land on his "fantayse" flood but crashing into the hard ground, her preparation to sail the seas with others dramatically converges her imagination with others' "reality."[90] This may emasculate John within his own tale, but within the larger context of the First Fragment, it comically undercuts Arcite's "manye" and own fatal crash. The Jailer's Daughter's parallel moment of madness on public display also carries a "quiting" power, allowing her to assert a rogue, commanding feminine presence in Theseus's realm.

In the play, Arcite's definitive crash to the ground from his "vessel" of Emilia's horse contrasts with the Jailer's Daughter's uncertain landing. After the contest, Pirithous recounts that

> His victor's wreath
> Even then fell off his head and presently
> Backward the jade comes o'ver and his full poise
> Becomes the rider's load. Yet is he living,
> But such a vessel 'tis, that floats but for
> The surge that next approaches. (5.4.79-84)

Arcite may avoid succumbing to "manye" in Theseus's realm, but he ultimately cannot direct his "vessel." While the Jailer's Daughter commands her imaginary ship, he passively "floats," vulnerable to the "the surge that next approaches." This is not the first time the kinsmen are described as "vessels" subject to eternal powers. Speaking to Palamon before the contest, Arcite

[90] In *The Miller's Tale*, this moment demonstrates that metaphorical "water" need not be real to have real consequences. As David Williams observes, "although no water flows in John's world, the 'flood' that occurs has the same effect, the destruction of a misconstructed world where ways and directions have grown corrupt." See "Radical Therapy in the 'Miller's Tale,'" *The Chaucer Review* 15 (1981): 227-35, at 232.

laments their lack of agency: "So hoist we / The sails that must these vessels port, even where / The heavenly Limiter pleases." (5.1.28-30). Palamon and Arcite must remain powerless to the "Limiter's" prewritten script, pulled by the surges of an established source story. In contrast, the Jailer's Daughter's fluid embodiment of "quiting" responses within *The Knight's Tale* frame frees her from such firm predestination.

This separation from the romance creates frustration for her, of course. Largely sealed off from the nobles after freeing Palamon, the Jailer's Daughter goes so far as to seek "the flood" (4.1.95) offstage before appearing to direct her "ship" and "crew." Yet even if she never consummates her desire for the true Palamon, her presence forces *The Knight's Tale* to share a stage with what Chaucer's narrator purposefully excludes. While the nobles remain solidly contained in Theseus's realm, her "otherworldly" mad feeling permeates the frame. When read as a figure of intertextual connection, she leaks beyond the bounds of the single work; she becomes not merely another mad Renaissance woman on the stage, or even John dropped into the frame of *The Knight's Tale*. Rather, she embodies a collective "quiting" current that flows from diverse source texts into the solid structure of the play. The Jailer's Daughter proves not an alien to the play's "noble breeder" in the context of the fabliau-inspired stories' relationship to foundational tale, but rather an extension of a more complete spirit of Chaucer's works. In *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, she is the threatening, watery female as figured across the First Fragment.

Shakespeare and Fletcher conclude the Prologue to *The Two Noble Kinsmen* with a metaphor that depicts their relationship to the play's "noble breeder," Chaucer: the authors, "weak as we are, and, almost breathless, swim / In this deep water" (Prologue 24-25). Despite her strong associations with water, the Jailer's Daughter has long been presumed to stand on a distant shore. Her character's "mad" feeling and feminine sexuality, though, channels the

possibilities of *The Knight's Tale* and the "quiting" responses it generates. Literal and metaphorical water "propels" all the stories of the First Fragment: the "infinite" "teeres" (2829) provoke Theseus and Saturn in *The Knight's Tale*; a "fantayse" flood instigates the action of *The Miller's Tale*; and the brook powers the mill in *The Reeve's Tale* (3922-23). Of all the characters in the play, she seems to inherit this energy. It is her "leaks" that mark the space where these different genres, classes, and texts converge.

The character of the Jailer's Daughter thus offers a surprising means of connection not only to *The Knight's Tale*, the obvious source text, but also to the other tales of the First Fragment which "quite" the formal tale of courtly love; her "mad" feeling swells from both the exclusions and the responsive possibilities of the First Fragment. Palamon and Arcite's carefully managed courtly love, the controlled "boket in a welle" moving up and down, contrasts with her flooding, "moped" madness and sexuality. The play may initially attempt to figure its text "as compliant women ('New Playes, and Maydenheads are near a kin')," as Masten finds, but ultimately it is the kinsmen who must follow a set script.[91] Instead, she challenges conceptions of definitive authority with her "leaky" intertextual connections. The conclusion of the play, Jeanne Addison Roberts argues, shows that "male boundaries… have been temporarily shored up. Social definitions survive, but the embattled beachhead remains insecure and unstable."[92] Though named for her patriarchal relation, the Jailer's Daughter's undetermined fate and slippery origins allow her to contest this "beachhead" more than any other character in the play. She should seemingly bear no connection to the source, but her watery fantasies leak the Chaucerian "quiting" spirit into the story that unfolds around her. Channeling the First Fragment, the Jailer's

[91] Masten, *Textual Intercourse*, 8.
[92] Roberts, *The Shakespearean Wild*, 139.

Daughter commands her ship in the volatile waters that seep into *The Knight's Tale* frame of the play.

**Conclusion: Character as Conduit for Source**

To return to the opening question, we may never know the precise "where" and "when" of how Shakespeare read his Chaucer, but we can begin to picture the vastness of this "how." Shakespeare's understanding of Chaucer proves to be both wide and deep in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*; he explores the complexities of not only *The Knight's Tale*, but also works like the *Canterbury Tales* as a larger whole. In ways akin to the use of Theseus in *Dream*, Shakespeare and Fletcher employ the unit of a character to "carry" the world of Chaucer to the play. But the Jailer's Daughter is a leaky vessel for such a task; she "madly" spills Chaucer's complexity all over *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. If Theseus regulates deviant discourses, she deviates from regulated discourse, acting as a conduit for the especially fluid influences of the "noble breeder." Established models of source study, which maintain that Chaucer's world should be fully contained within the tale of Palamon and Arcite, require disregarding her character; she lacks the "solid ground" of a direct analogue in Chaucer. Her embodiment of a larger Chaucerian current in the play, though, shows Shakespeare's channeling the complexity of a source through the unit of a character. The Jailer's Daughter's boundaries remain ultimately fluid, elucidating the permeable boundaries of influence itself.

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